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URGENT ACTION

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Fear for safety

28 April 1999

EAST TIMOR

Several human rights organizations, including Yayasan HAK, Fokupers, Kontras

Amnesty International is seriously concerned for the safety of human rights defenders in East Timor, who are being intimidated, apparently by paramilitary and military units.

On 28 April 1999 several non-governmental human rights organizations held a meeting with the British Foreign and Commonwealth Office Minister, Derek Fatchett, in the offices of *Yayasan HAK*, Human Rights Foundation. They urged the British government to pressure Indonesia to end human rights violations and to allow international human rights monitoring in East Timor. The groups then issued a joint public statement reiterating these demands. Groups at the meeting included *Yayasan HAK*, *Fokupers*, the Communication Forum for Timorese Women; *Kontras*, the Committee for the "Disappeared" and Victims of Violence; *Gertak*, East Timorese Women's Movement Against Violence; *Dewan Solidaritas Mahasiswa Timor Timur* (DSMTT), East Timorese Students Solidarity Council; *Grupo Feto Foin Sae Timor Lorosae* (GFFT), Timorese Female Youth Group; and *Posko Bantuan Darurat untuk Pengungsi Internal*, Command Post for Emergency Relief for Internal Refugees.

At around 7 pm a group of five or six men - some in military uniform - came to the *Yayasan HAK* office. They left shortly afterwards, but another group - not in uniform - arrived at 9.30 pm and stayed for around 20 minutes. The identity of both groups is not clear but they are either from the Indonesian Armed Forces (ABRI) or paramilitary units operating with ABRI support. It seems they intended to intimidate *Yayasan HAK* and the other organizations who had been at the meeting.

Several human rights organizations, and people working with them, including *Yayasan HAK* director Aniceto Guterres and deputy director Ze Luis de Oliveira, are believed to be on lists of people and organizations compiled by paramilitary units as possible targets.

Concerns for human rights monitors and supporters of independence are also raised by brochures circulated in Dili by a paramilitary group called *Darah Merah*, Red Blood. These say that the group will begin an operation in Dili on 1 May to "destroy" pro-independence groups in East Timor. Similar threats have in the past been followed by serious human rights violations. Amnesty International believes that this threat should be taken seriously, and that the Indonesian Government should take steps to prevent paramilitary attacks on supporters of independence and human rights defenders.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Since 5 April, paramilitary groups, supported by ABRI, have carried out arbitrary detentions, torture and unlawful killings during violent attacks in several towns across East Timor, in an attempt to seek out supporters of independence. At least 18, and possibly many more, people were killed in Liquisa on 6 April when paramilitary units - backed up by ABRI - attacked a church where around 2000 local residents had sought refuge from earlier paramilitary assaults.

Since 17 April at least 14 people and possibly many more are believed to have been killed in Dili by paramilitary units. Similar operations are taking place in other towns, including Suai, Liquisa and Ermera. There are continuing reports of arbitrary detentions, unlawful killings and "disappearances", including the

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killing of seven men in Liquisa since 21 April. Paramilitary road-blocks and threats are preventing confirmation of these reports.

Despite the signing of a peace agreement on 21 April between ABRI, the National Council of Timorese Resistance (CNRT), the paramilitaries and the political groups that support integration, the situation in Dili remains tense. Paramilitary units are still visible on the streets. There are new reports that they will launch another operation to seek out supporters of independence from 28 April through to the beginning of May. Supporters of independence and human rights monitors, many of whom remain in hiding, are still at risk of arrest or violent attacks.

The Indonesian authorities say they have arrested 15 members of paramilitary units for their involvement in attacks since 17 April.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send telegrams/telexes/faxes/express/airmail letters in Bahasa Indonesia or English or your own language:

- urging the authorities to take immediate steps to protect human rights workers from threats, intimidation or violent attacks by paramilitary or military units;
- urging the authorities to investigate any threats against human rights organization and to bring those responsible to justice;
- in view of the threat issued by *Darah Merah*, urging the authorities to take steps to prevent paramilitary attacks on supporters of independence;
- urging the authorities to disarm and disband all paramilitary groups in East Timor.

APPEALS TO:

MINISTER OF DEFENSE AND SECURITY

Gen. Wiranto
Menteri Pertahanan dan Keamanan
Jl. Medan Merdeka Barat No.13-14
Jakarta 10110
Indonesia
Fax: + 62 21 381 4535/ 384 5178
Salutation: Dear Minister

COPIES TO:

PRESIDENT

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and to diplomatic representatives of Indonesia accredited to your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 9 June 1999.